



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

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## **ICE-LED, MULTI-AGENCY GANG CRACKDOWN LEADS TO ARREST OF 24 MEMBERS & ASSOCIATES OF MS-13 IN SEATTLE AREA**

***Local MS-13 leader is among those arrested in latest Operation Community Shield action***

SEATTLE – A total of 24 members and associates of the violent Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) street gang were arrested here last week on a range of criminal and administrative charges in a coordinated multi-agency enforcement operation. Among the 20 foreign nationals and four United States citizens taken into custody was Yoni Gonzales, a known MS-13 gang leader in the Seattle area.

The week-long operation was organized by ICE as part of “Operation Community Shield,” a n ongoing national ICE anti-gang initiative designed to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute violent gang members and their organizations. Other agencies participating in the Seattle operation included the U.S. Marshals Service, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Washington Department of Corrections; the Seattle Police Department; the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area task force; and the United States Attorney’s Office.

The majority of the men arrested during last week’s operation had criminal histories, including prior convictions for narcotics distribution and assault. Almost all of the subjects admitted being members of MS-13 in the Seattle area and had tattoos showing their gang affiliation. The non-citizens taken into custody included foreign nationals from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico.

“We have a message for the violent street gang members in America: ‘stopping your violence and criminal activities is high on our list of ICE’s priorities,’” said Brad Bench, acting special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in Seattle. “Working with our law enforcement counterparts, we are going to use every tool at our disposal to take these criminals off the streets and break the cycle of gang-related violence that is threatening the safety of our communities.”

In January, ICE launched Operation Community Shield, a national anti-gang initiative that brings all of ICE’s law enforcement powers to bear in the fight against violent gangs. Initially, Operation Community Shield targeted members of MS-13. In May, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members.

To date, Operation Community Shield has resulted in the arrest of more than 1,260 gang members and associates nationwide, including approximately 632 members of MS-13. Of all those arrested, a total of 276 have been charged with criminal violations while a total of 986 have been charged with administrative immigration violations.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*